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REMARKS

The claims are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, for being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject-matter that Applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner states that several features of the claims are not shown in the figures or lack support in the specification. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

The Examiner rejected claim 9 which recites a connecting surface that defines an access opening to a door interior. Figure 3 shows connecting surfaces 18 and 18A that define an access opening 1B to a door interior 1A. The paragraph beginning on page 7, line 13, has been amended to more clearly state this. Support for this amendment is found in the abstract and in Figure 3.

Claim 12 also stands rejected. Claim 12 recites a seal that seals a vehicle door with respect to a vehicle chassis and is arranged on a door side of a connecting surface between a first stiffening element and a second stiffening element. Figure 3 shows a seal 32 that seals a vehicle door 1 with respect to a vehicle chassis 2 and is arranged on a door side of a connecting surface 18 between a first stiffening element 12 and a second stiffening element 14. Support for this claim is found in the paragraph beginning on page 9, line 6 of the specification.

Claim 14 also stands rejected. Claim 14 recites a lock component wall provided on one of a first stiffening element and a second stiffening element and a free wall provided on the other of the first stiffening element and the second stiffening element. The free wall is sealingly supported against the one of the first stiffening element and the second stiffening element to encapsulate a door lock. Figure 3 shows a lock component wall 22A provided on one of a first stiffening element 12 and a second stiffening element 12 and a free wall 22D provided on the other of the first stiffening element 12 and the second stiffening element 14. The free wall 22D is sealingly supported against the one of the first stiffening element 12 and the second stiffening element 14 to encapsulate a door lock 22. Support for this claim is found in the paragraphs beginning on page 7, line 30 and page 8, line 8 of the specification. The claims are all supported by the specification and the figures, and Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 9-11, 13-14, 16-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 (b) as being anticipated by Nishikawa (United States Patent No. 6,474,721). The Examiner states that Nishikawa discloses a pan-shaped internal structure having a first stiffening structure for supporting an outer panel element and a second stiffening element for supporting a hinge (a functional part), and therefore the claimed invention is anticipated. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

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The claimed invention is not anticipated by Nishikawa. Nishikawa does not disclose a vehicle door including an internal stiffening structure having a first stiffening element and a second stiffening element that contact at a connecting surface that defines an access opening to a door interior. The Examiner contends that an inner door panel D1 of Nishikawa is the second stiffening structure, and a plastic mounting panel P is the first stiffening structure. In Nishikawa, the inner door panel D1 and the plastic mounting panel P are separated by a sealing member 19, shown in Figure 8. Because of the sealing member 19, the inner door panel D1 and the mounting panel P do not contact as claimed. Nishikawa discloses no contact of the inner door panel D1 and the mounting panel P. Nishikawa does not disclose the claimed invention, and Applicant requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 12-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishikawa in view of Koa (United States Patent No. 6,412,852). The Examiner admits that Nishikawa does not disclose a connecting bolt. The Examiner states that Kao teaches a connecting bolt 25, and it would be obvious to employ a connecting bolt in Nishikawa because of Kao, and therefore the claimed invention is obvious. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Claim 13 is not obvious. There is no motivation to replace the sealing member 19 of Nishikawa with a connecting bolt as suggested by the Examiner. Nishikawa teaches that the sealing member 19 is made of waterproof rubber strip. If the sealing member 19 was replaced with a bolt, this waterproof function would not be provided or would be reduced, destroying this feature of Nishikawa. There is no motivation to replace the sealing member 19 of Nishikawa with a bolt. The claimed invention is not obvious, and Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 12 is also not obvious. Claim 12 depends on patentable independent claim 9 and is allowable for the reasons set forth above. Adding Kao to Nishikawa still does not disclose, suggest or teach the claimed invention because neither reference alone teaches a vehicle door including an internal stiffening structure having a first stiffening element and a second stiffening element that contact at a connecting surface that defines an access opening to a door interior as claimed. Therefore, the combination of the references does not disclose the claimed invention. Claim 12 is not obvious, and Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Thus, claims 9-20 are in condition for allowance. The Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482, in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds, P.C., \$120.00 for a

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one-month extension of time. No additional fees are seen to be required. If any additional fees are required, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482, in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds, P.C., for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment. Therefore, favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, (703) 872-9306 on March 7, 2005.


Amy Spaulding